

California Water Conditions Synopsis for October 2003

Water year 2003-04 began with a hot, dry October. There were hundreds of record daily high temperatures set at stations across California from October 17 to 28. The end of October brought rapid cooling, below normal temperatures, and the first significant precipitation of the water year. Statewide river runoff dropped to the lowest levels since a year ago, and statewide reservoir storage dropped to about average.

Precipitation during October was much below normal across California. There was no appreciable precipitation and no snow accumulation until the very end of the month.

Temperatures during October were above normal inland and near normal along the coast. A strong upper level ridge of high pressure and offshore flow brought over 240 high temperature records to California from October 17 to 28. The record temperatures occurred at stations across the state, but were concentrated in southern and inland areas.

Runoff during October continued at low levels, about 60 percent of average statewide, with very low river levels in the coastal regions and southern Sierra.

Reservoir storage in the State's largest 151 reservoirs decreased to 58 percent of capacity on October 31, about 10 percent more than last year. Storage in most major reservoirs is well below the maximum winter flood control limits.

Long-range weather forecasts remain uncertain. The NWS Climate Prediction Center reports that current oceanic conditions in the tropical Pacific have warmed to slightly above average, and it is likely that these weak El Niño conditions will persist through the winter.